

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 056008

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM COTONOU DTD 09 MAR 1977 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0485

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, PINT, PDIP, DM, US

SUBJ: DIPLOMATIC CORPS MEETING ON BENINESE PROPOSED INTERNAL
SECURITY RESTRICTIONS

REF: A. STATE 049148 B. COTONOU 0439

1. MAJORITY OF RESIDENT CHIEFS OF MISSION PLUS EEC AND UN REPRESENTATIVES MET AT INVITATION OF FRENCH AMBASSADOR (DEAN) TO DISCUSS GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN'S (GPRB) ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RESTRICT MOVEMENT OF DIPLOMATS. DURING CORDIAL, BUT OFTEN BLUNT EXCHANGE OF IDEAS GROUP DIVIDED ITSELF INTO (A) THOSE WHO FELT WE WERE FACED WITH FAIT ACCOMPLI AND HAD TO SEEK SPECIFIC EXCEPTIONS FROM REGULATIONS (FRANCE, ZAIRE); (B) THOSE WHO THOUGHT WE OUGHT TO TAKE FIRM STAND ON PRINCIPLES OF VIENNA CONVENTION AND MAKE BENINESE CLARIFY THEIR POSITION ON APPLICABILITY OF CONVENTION (US, GERMANY, NIGER, WITH RESERVATIONS EGYPT AND CANADA); (C) THOSE WHO WERE NOT COVERED BY CON-

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PAGE 02 STATE 056008

VENTION (EEC/FED AND UN); (D) THOSE WHO THOUGHT, OR AT LEAST SAID, NOTHING AT ALL (GHANA, USSR). CHINA, NIGERIA, AND NORTH KOREA WERE NOT REPRESENTED. AFTER LONG DISCUSSION, ONLY SPECIFIC SUBJECT ON WHICH UNANIMITY EMERGED WAS REQUEST FOR RESTORATION OF TELEPHONE SERVICE STILL BEING WITHHELD BY GPRB.

2. DISCUSSION SHIFTED TO BEST MEANS OF BRINGING OUR COLLECTIVE

CONCERN TO ATTENTION GPRB. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BELIEVED PROPER METHOD WOULD BE TO GO THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY BUT ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR KUMUAMBA RESPONDED THAT ONLY PRESIDENT KEREKOU PERSONALLY WOULD BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH SITUATION, SINCE HE IN FACT IS THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT TO GO TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD BE TO INVITE SILENCE OR EVASION. ZAIRIAN THEN PROPOSED SEEKING COLLECTIVE AUDIENCE WITH KEREKOU, TO BE ARRANGED BY DEAN SIMULTANEOUSLY THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY AND CHEF DE CABINET OF PRESIDENT. SUGGESTION MET WITH GENERAL APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE AND DEAN AGREED TO PURSUE IT.

3. COMMENT: SINCE DECREES HAVE YET TO BE PUBLISHED BELIEVE WE SHOULD JOIN IN EFFORT TO HAVE GROUP MEETING WITH KEREKOU, AS THERE IS CHANCE THAT HE MAY NOT HAVE CONSIDERED EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE DECREES WOULD VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL NORMS. ZAIRIAN THOUGHT KEREKOU MIGHT BE ALERTED TO FACT THAT BENINESE REPRESENTATIVES IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES NOT TREATED IN MANNER BENIN TREATS FOREIGN DIPLOMATS. (THIS WAS CLOSEST ANYONE CAME TO OFFERING TO APPLY RECIPROCITY, ALTHOUGH FRENCH AMB NOTED THAT PARIS HAD REFUSED TO CUT OFF BENINESE AMBASSADOR'S TELEPHONE).

4. BELIEVE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO SEE WHETHER COLLECTIVE AUDIENCE WITH KEREKOU IS FEASIBLE, AND IF IT METARIALIZES SHORTLY, RESERVE ACTION UNTIL WE CAN GAUGE PRESIDENT'S ATTITUDE. IF DECREES PROMULGATED AND IMPLEMENTED BEFORE MEETING, WE CAN ALWAYS PROCEED WITH STEPS OUTLINED REFTELS.

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PAGE 03 STATE 056008

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